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# Religion and Education

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## Religion and Education

In the spring of 1843 a little group of students met at dusk in the chapel of the Andover Theological Seminary to pray for guidance. They had heard the command, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel," but they knew not where to begin their ministry. Most of them were already thinking in terms of the West — states like Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois offering rare opportunities. They had even contemplated Missouri or the Territory of Iowa. Finally, after a day of fasting and praying, one of the group — Daniel Lane by name — declared: "Well, I am going to Iowa: whether anyone else goes or not, I am going." One by one the others came to the same decision. Thus was formed what is known as the "Iowa Band" of Congregational ministers.

Meeting as they did in a seminary library, it is not surprising that the Iowa Band should have a twofold objective. "If each one of us can only plant one good permanent church, and all together build a college, what a work that would be!" said one member of the Band as they planned their work in the West. They never faltered in the attainment of these objectives.

Early in November, 1843, most of the eleven



men who made up the Iowa Band assembled at Denmark in the Territory of Iowa. Two had already been ordained, but on November 5 seven more were ordained by the Denmark Congregational Association, which had been organized only two days earlier. Meanwhile, the men had chosen their preaching locations. Daniel Lane went to Keosauqua, and A. B. Robbins chose Bloomington — now Muscatine. Horace Hutchinson preferred Burlington, and Harvey Adams decided upon Farmington. William Salter located at Maquoketa, and Edwin B. Turner took Cascade. Ebenezer Alden was assigned to Solon and Ephraim Adams to Mount Pleasant. Benjamin A. Spaulding agreed to try his fortunes in the New Purchase on the fringe of settlement.

The following Monday, November 6, 1843, these nine young members of the Iowa Band scattered to their posts. Their work was so arduous that they never again met all together in one place.

The following spring, 1844, James J. Hill took up his work at Garnavillo in remote Clayton County and Erastus Ripley located at Bentonsport in Van Buren County.

The contributions of the Iowa Band to the spiritual, cultural, and educational development of Iowa were tremendous. They succeeded in establishing many churches — James J. Hill alone is said to have founded seven churches before he died at Fayette in 1870. Alden B. Robbins remained at





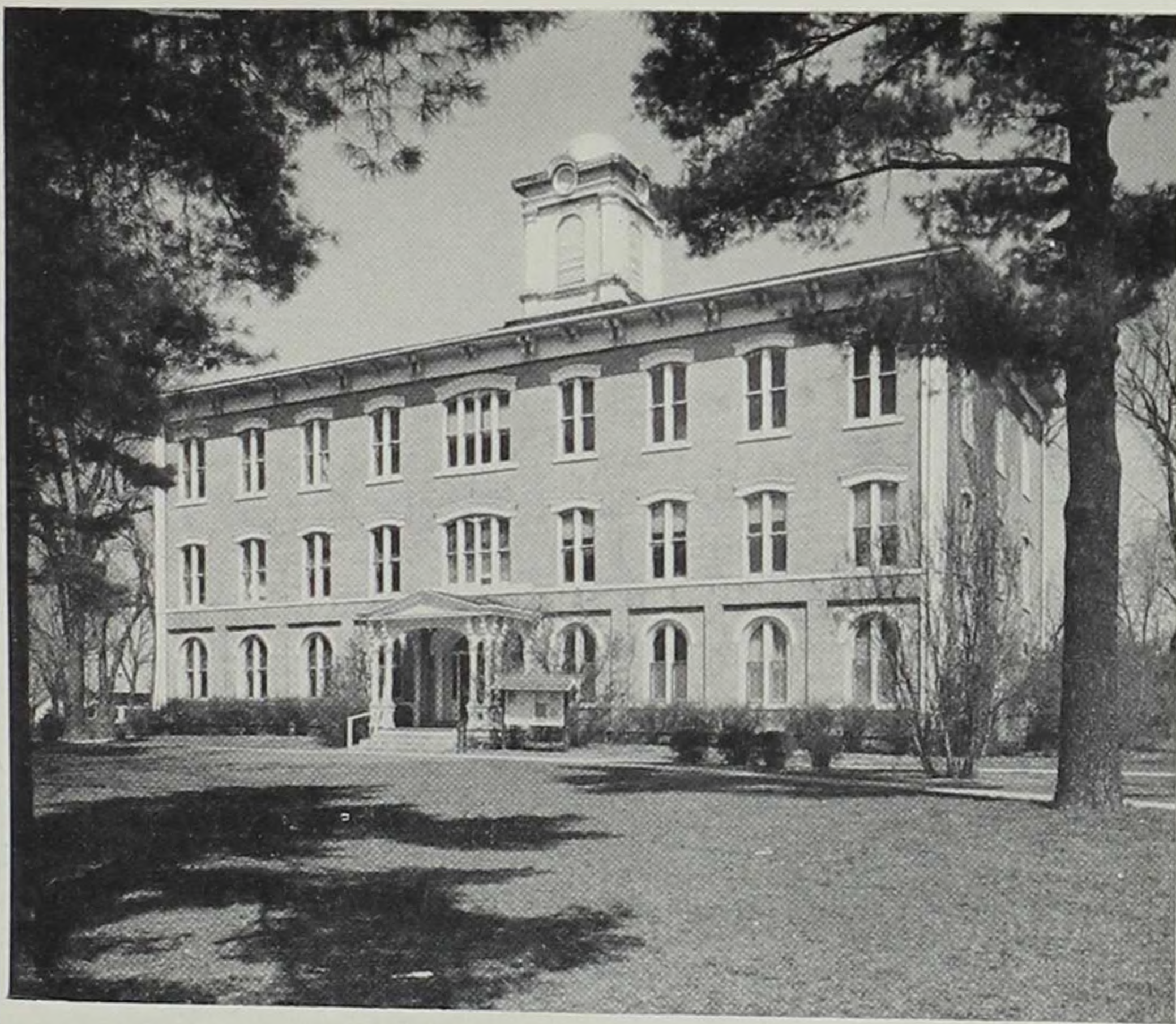
GEORGE WALLACE JONES  
*Delegate from Territory of Wisconsin*  
*U. S. Senator from Iowa — 1848-1859*





THEODORE SUTTON PARVIN  
*He Helped Save the Missouri as Western Boundary*



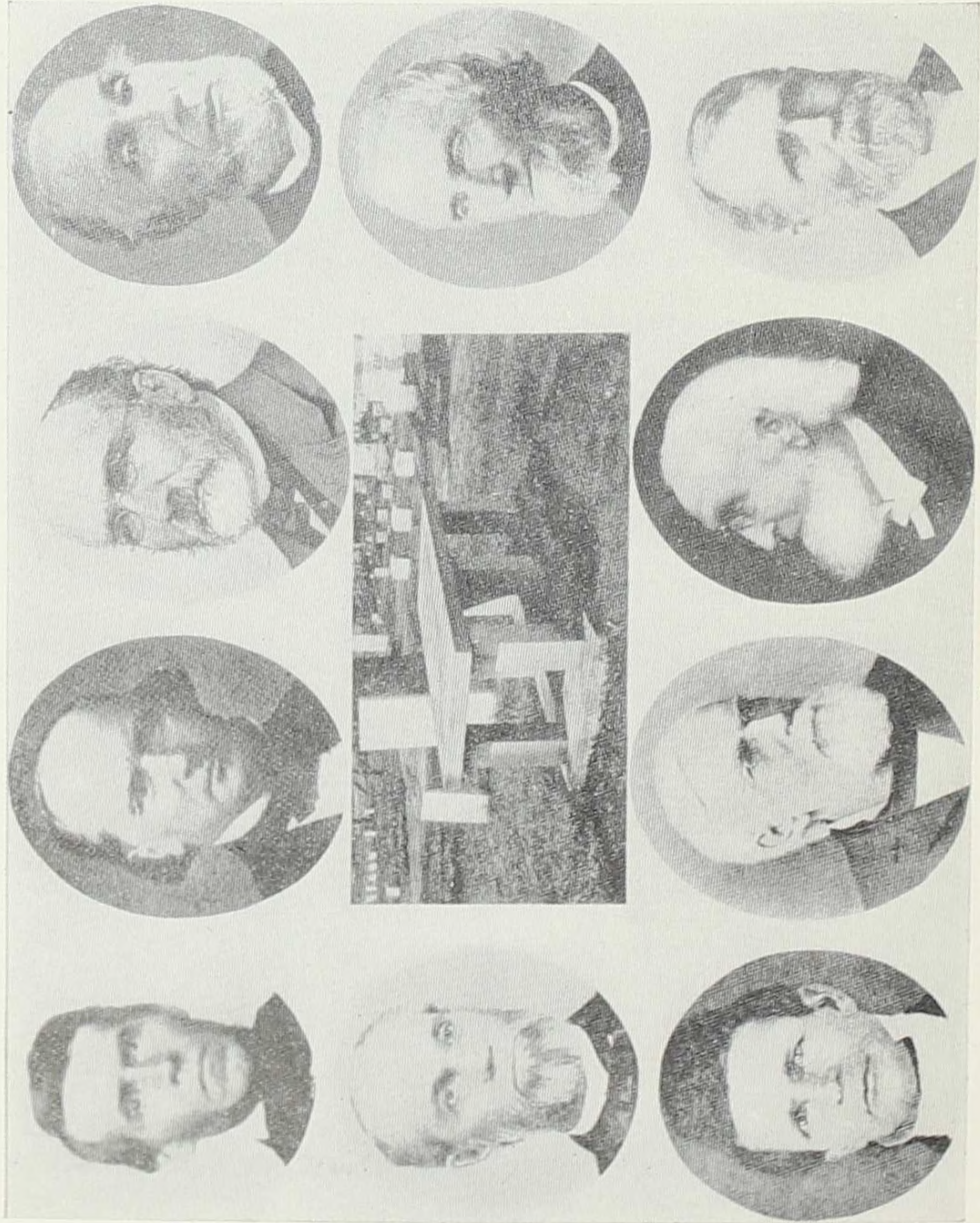


Old Main at Iowa Wesleyan  
*Where the P.E.O. Was Founded*



Memorial Library  
*Gift of P.E.O. to Iowa Wesleyan*





*Top, left to right:*

Benjamin A. Spaulding  
Erastus Ripley  
James J. Hill  
Ebenezer Alden

*Center:*

Edwin B. Turner  
Grave of Horace Hutchinson  
Daniel Lane

*Bottom:*

Harvey Adams  
Alden B. Robbins  
Ephraim Adams  
William Salter

From Douglass, *The Pilgrims of Iowa*, courtesy of Pilgrim Press

The Iowa Band — Founders of Grinnell College



Muscatine from 1843 until his death in 1896, resigning his pastorate in 1891. His compensation from the Muscatine church varied from \$150 a year in 1845 to \$1,800 in 1868, the highest salary he received. Robbins, like other members of the Iowa Band, was a staunch temperance worker and an ardent antislavery leader. Indeed, his church was known as the "Uncle Tom's Cabin Church." It was because of men like Robbins that Senator John C. Calhoun had violently opposed the establishment of the Territory of Iowa in 1838.

Ephraim Adams preached a year at Mount Pleasant, twelve at Davenport, fifteen at Decorah, and six more at Eldora, before retiring. He died at Waterloo in 1907 at the age of eighty-nine. The career of William Salter was equally impressive. After three years in Jackson County, Salter went to Burlington where he became one of the best loved and most influential members of the Iowa Band. Despite his busy pastoral life, Salter found time to write articles and books. Many of his sermons were printed. Among the best known of his more than forty publications are his *Life of James W. Grimes*; *Sixty Years and Other Discourses*; and *Iowa: the First Free State in the Louisiana Purchase*. Salter died at Burlington in 1910 — the last surviving member of the Iowa Band.

But what of the Christian college which these young men had pledged to establish in Iowa? The Iowa band had discussed this matter earnestly at



their first meeting and had appointed a committee to select a suitable site. At their second meeting they formed the Iowa College Association and sent Reverend Asa Turner east to secure funds. Unhappily, eastern philanthropists were unwilling to put their money into a "paper college," and Reverend Turner returned empty-handed.

By 1846 the Iowa Band agreed that the college should be located in Davenport. At one of the meetings of the Association James J. Hill laid a silver dollar on the table and said, "I give one dollar for the founding of a Christian College in Iowa. Appoint your trustees to care for that dollar." Other members of the Association added their contributions. Soon Iowa College was incorporated with a board of fifteen trustees — five of whom were from the Iowa Band. The doors of the college at Davenport were opened in November, 1848.

Like so many institutions of this kind, the early years were lean and full of tribulations. In 1859 the trustees of Iowa College agreed to move their school to Grinnell and combine it with a struggling institution there. Grinnell College — the fruit of this union — is one of the finest institutions of higher learning in the Middle West. Its list of distinguished alumni reads like a veritable "Who's Who in Iowa." Grinnell stands as a monument to the vision, sacrifice, and courage of those eleven inspired members of the Iowa Band.



Similar stories could be told of almost every institution of higher learning in Iowa. Iowa Wesleyan, Cornell, Dubuque, Coe, Loras, Luther, Drake, Morningside — these are but a few of the many schools that have helped mold Iowa youth since pioneer days. Moreover, many fine by-products have accrued from these institutions, varying from the Drake Relays to the Cornell Music Festival. The story of one of these by-products is especially interesting.

On January 21, 1869, two college girls were sitting on a stile in the fence at Iowa Wesleyan College at Mount Pleasant earnestly discussing in hushed tones some means of establishing a society which would band them and their friends together, both at college and in the years ahead. "Let's have a secret society of our own," said Hattie Briggs to her companion Franc Roads. Franc readily assented, and they hurried off at once to tell a few special friends.

The two girls confided their plan to five other girls. Alice Coffin suggested a meeting for that very afternoon. Alice Bird was directed to draft a constitution at once. Suela Pearson, Mary Allen, and Ella Stewart enthusiastically joined the group. That afternoon, behind carefully locked doors in Old Main, the seven girls met in secrecy and established a society known thereafter as the P. E. O.

The founding of the P. E. O. on Iowa Wesleyan campus is a noteworthy event in Iowa history. It



is noteworthy because of the speed with which the organization was established after the idea first struck Hattie Briggs. It is noteworthy because in 1869 there were very few women's organizations in the United States. It is noteworthy because the P. E. O. has grown into one of the largest and most influential women's organizations in the United States today.

The P. E. O. of 1869 has grown into a sisterhood of 3,015 chapters with 108,000 active members in almost every state, in Canada, Hawaii, and the District of Columbia. The P. E. O. operates Cottey College in Missouri. It has an Educational Fund of \$872,000 in 1952 and it has loaned \$3,-977,501.20 to 9,743 girls since the fund was created in 1907. It has a home for aged members, and its Memorial Library at Iowa Wesleyan is the most beautiful building on the campus.

The seven founders of the P. E. O. must be recognized as true builders of the Hawkeye State. They, together with the members of the Iowa Band, are but examples of the many individuals and groups who brought religion, education, and culture to the Iowa frontier.

WILLIAM J. PETERSEN